

# Social Media, Libraries, and Web 2.0: How American Libraries are Using New Tools for Public Relations and to Attract New Users – Second Survey November 2009

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Curtis R. Rogers, Ed.D.



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State Library  
[www.statelibrary.sc.gov](http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov)

POB 11469, Columbia, SC  
29211

803-734-8928

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# Overview

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## How are American libraries using Web 2.0 applications and social networking tools to promote their library programs and services?

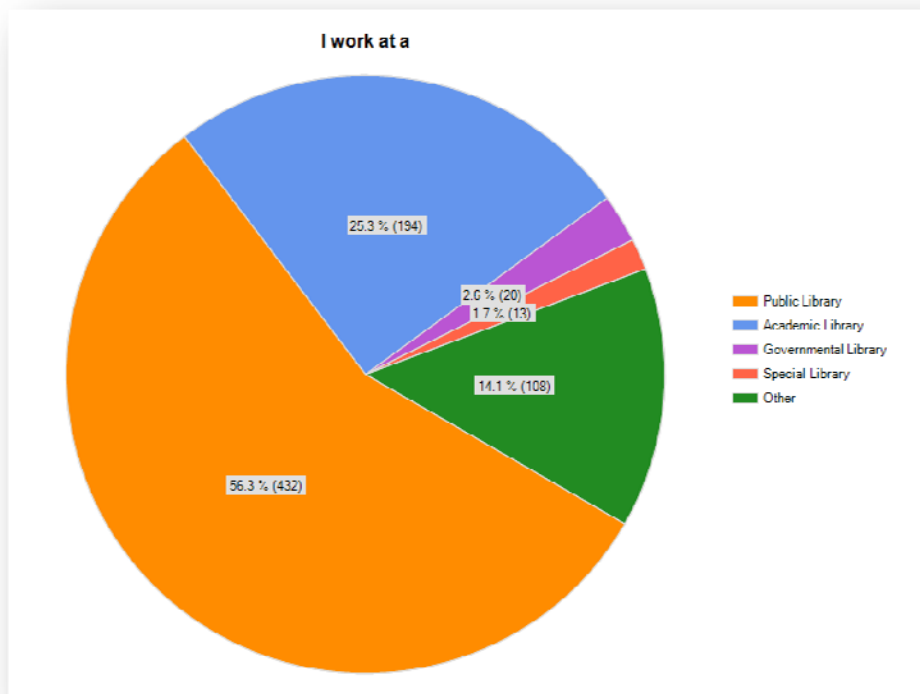
This survey is the second attempt to get feedback from library staff members in the U.S. to determine how libraries are employing a variety of Web 2.0 and social networking tools to promote library programs and services. The first survey took place between March 14 and March 21, 2009 to gather data for a paper that was presented at the 2009 German Library Association Annual Conference in Erfurt, Germany (Deutscher Bibliothekartag 2009 June 2-5 <http://www.bibliothekartag2009.de/>). The original paper with first survey results is published online via Slideshare:

<http://www.slideshare.net/crr29061/social-media-libraries-and-web-20-how-american-libraries-are-using-new-tools-for-public-relations-and-to-attract-new-users>

This report presents the survey results from the second survey which ran from November 12 to November 25, 2009.

## Survey Results

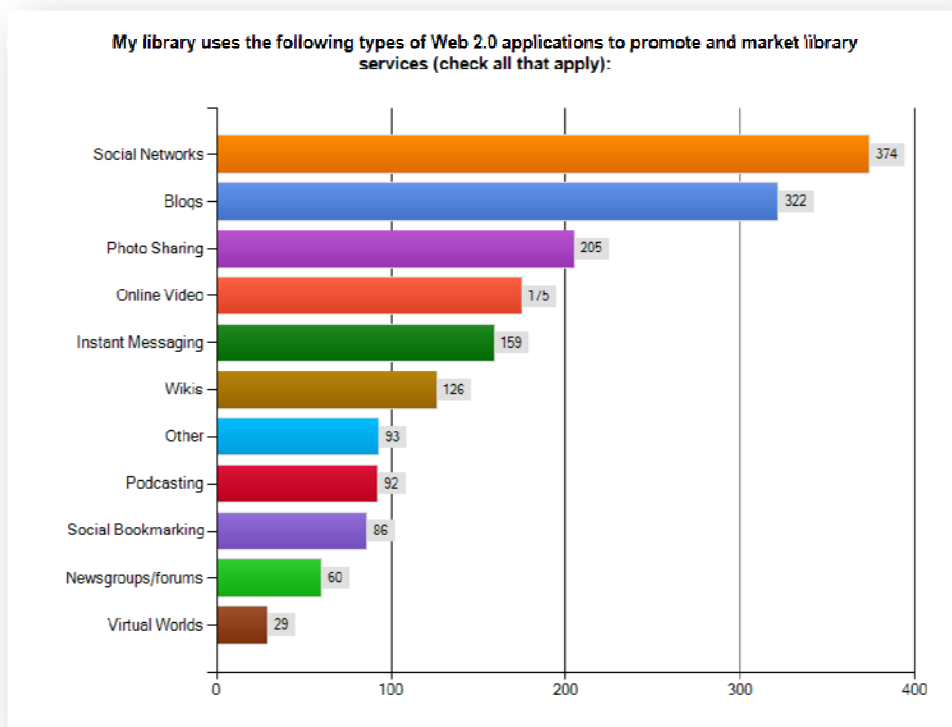
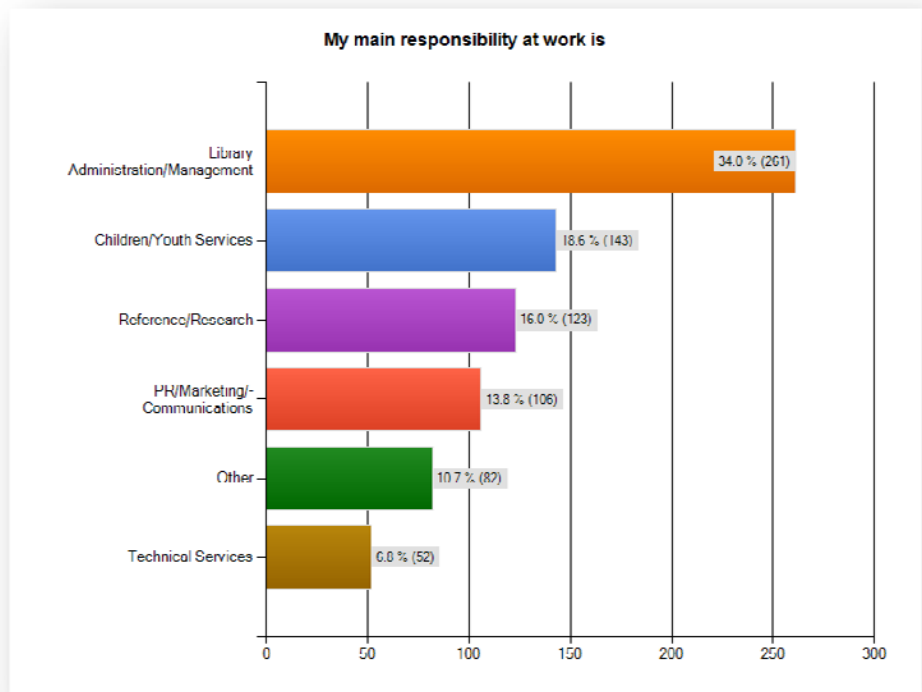
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A total of 768 individuals began the survey with 545 completing it. 56.3% of respondents represented public libraries and 25.3% represented academic libraries. The majority of respondents (261 – 34%) reported their main responsibility at work is in the library administration/management area. 143 (18.6%) of the respondents reported

their main responsibility at work was in the children's and/or youth services area. Other responses came from individuals who work in reference/research (16%), public relations/marketing/communications (13.8%), and technical services (6.8%). One potential respondent identified as a library board member said he

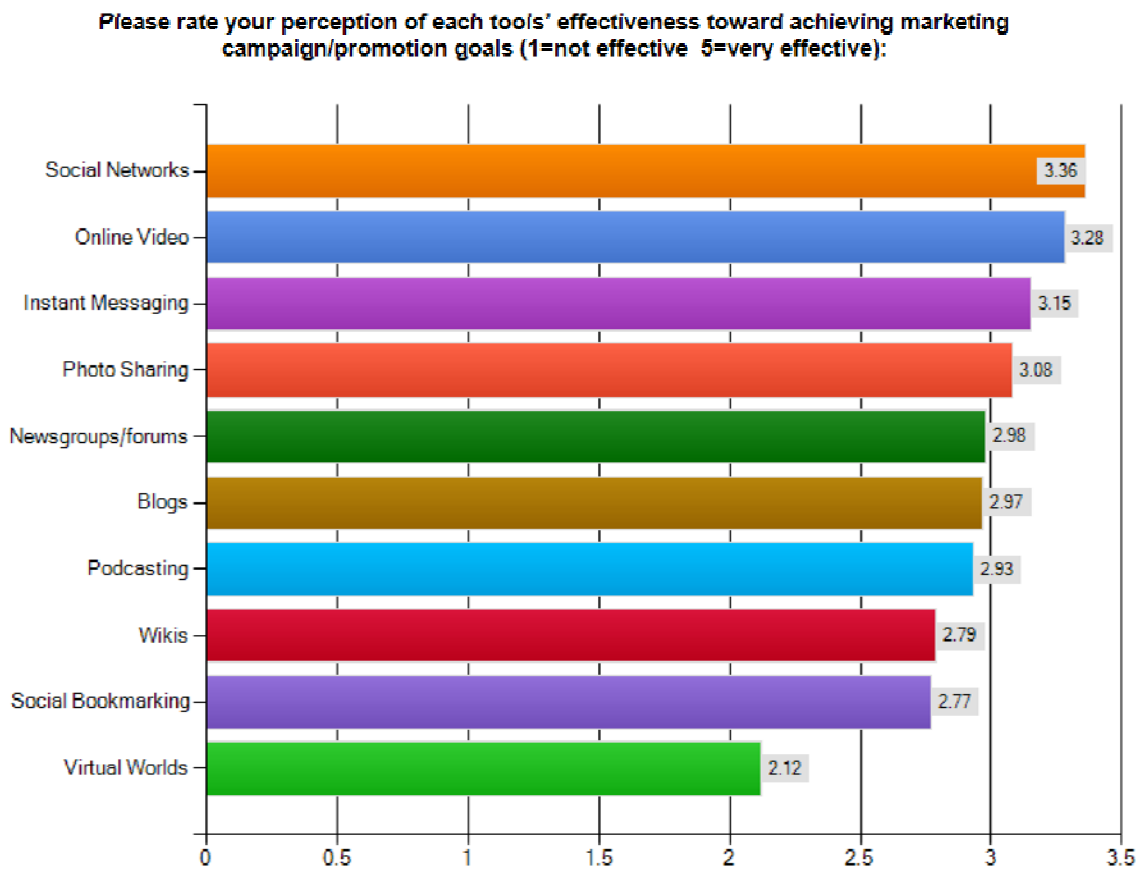
was unable to complete the survey because trustees and friends were not represented. When the third release of this survey takes place in 2010, more categories will be added to address other populations who work with libraries.



Out of 531 respondents to the question, "My library uses the following types of Web 2.0 applications to promote and market library services," social networks (374) and blogs (322) were the highest on the list. Many libraries have also begun implementing

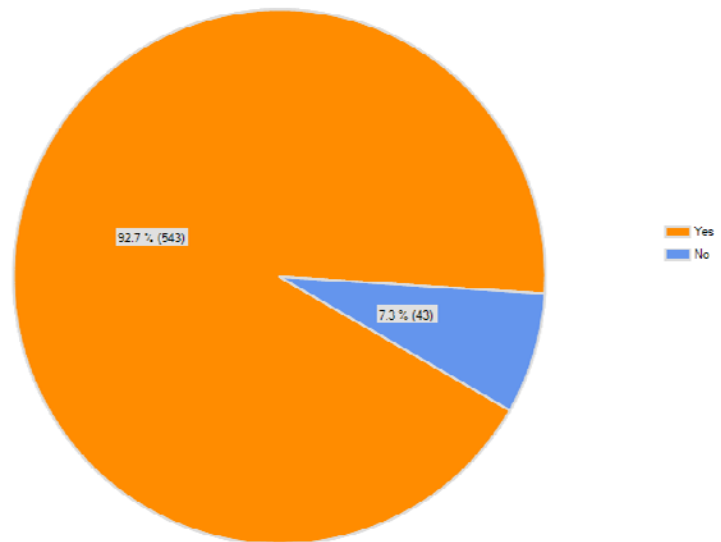
photo sharing tools as well as online video. Virtual worlds were used the least. This may be due to the level of sophistication involved in creating and navigating through tools such as Second Life. Virtual world implementation and use also requires a significant amount of time which may also account for this to receive the lowest amount (29) of responses.

Respondents also rated their perception of each tools' effectiveness toward achieving marketing campaign and/or promotion goals. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being very effective and 1 being not effective, respondents ranked social networks as the highest with an average of 3.36. Coming in second was online video with an average ranking of 3.28.



An overwhelming number of responses (543, 92.7%) to the question, “Do you think Web 2.0 tools are important for marketing and promoting library services?” responded positively with only 43 (7.3%) stating they did not think Web 2.0 tools were important. 158 respondents provided qualitative information in the form of comments. The following are selected responses representing a broad spectrum of how respondents feel about using these tools to promote library services. Many mentioned time constraints as a reason for not implementing these tools fully and some still feel that there is not enough data to prove these tools work.

Do you think Web 2.0 tools are important for marketing and promoting library services?



*Particularly in teen services, Web 2.0 is where the patrons are. We have to meet them there.*

*I think web 2.0 tools are critical for marketing to teens. Blogs could be useful for adult book clubs. It's really important to understand the audience. The challenge is maintaining the web 2.0 tool and having a large enough audience that wishes to participate.*

*I do not use Web 2.0 tools because they are blocked by our school's filter and banned by central administration.*

*I think they are very important -- it is where our users are. Unfortunately, I do not sense a lot of buy-in amongst the administration and the supervisors (many who have been here many years, and consider social media/web2.0 tools, literally a joke).*

*We would love to be more technologically savvy, but our budget, staffing, and equipment for our 51-branch system doesn't support anything beyond a very basic automated system with a public catalog, access to subscription electronic databases, and a very basic website to link the above. We cannot afford a webmaster, and we are woefully lagging behind. We have not had a*

*Important doesn't really do it justice. Any library that is not using Web 2.0 technology is not only hurting itself, but it is hurting the future of ALL libraries.*

*true systems administrator ever in charge of our automated functions, and our technical support staff, while great guys, came to their current jobs when their media functions were phased out, so are not certified or degreed computer geeks. We are lucky they are as competent as they are. With the current economy, we really are not able to envision a time in the future when we will ever catch up with the technology!*

*Web 2.0 tools can be very beneficial if they are deployed with a clear purpose, match target audience preferences, and have evaluation mechanisms to measure desired result.*

*I think the tools are helpful in "grabbing" people's attention in order to get certain messages across. However, the depth of content that can be communicated through such tools is limited. Also, it should not be*

*This is a yes and no - I think if done properly regularly and with a specific measurable goal in mind they can help - but they must be looked in the larger scope of promotion - they are not an ends to themselves.*

*assumed that all members of a particular library community will definitely be always "tuned in" to the use of Web 2.0 tools.*

***Web 2.0 tools show that the library is modern and aware of current trends. That alone, besides any message that can be related to other users of Web 2.0, is a promotion of the library.***

*Web 2.0 tools are important, but only to your users who use web 2.0. They should be balanced and blended with traditional marketing and promotional tools.*


*I believe web 2.0 can be integral to marketing the library but it has to be coupled with campaigns on campus to get the residents and other students INTO the library, first!*

*I think that Web 2.0 tools can be useful-- however, there is still the need to overcome ingrained attitudes and stereotypes directed at libraries and librarians. I have very little evidence to suggest that students are viewing our news feed or following us on any social networking site. I feel that while Web 2.0 can be harnessed for positive marketing, I feel that the assumption that if a 2.0 tool is there we need or should use it is flawed. My experience (and many of my colleagues' experience) is that the students*

*are still unable to perform the most basic computer tasks (such as saving files to non-default directories) and are not interested in libraries' attempts to be "cool" by using Twitter, FB, etc. Rather, I feel that Web 2.0 tools should be focused on enhancing core services, such as reference, retrieval, and searching. Tools that move the library away from a single building and even a single site are the best options, in my opinion. In my library we use chat for reference and have LibX as a tool to search for any book online in our catalog (so linking from amazon.com, for example, to our catalog). This is functional and thus makes sense. Tweeting catchy updates don't interest me and I work at the library--why do we imagine that students would follow us and be interested in the brief "updates" or "news" required by the Twitter format? I am a skeptic--I view Web 2.0 tools similarly to all other tools (both digital and analog)--if they add value, we should consider using them. If they are simply the newest "2.0" thing, we need to evaluate them and see where and to what extent they address a known need of our*

*(frequently less savvy than assumed) patronage.*

*Don't get me wrong, I love Web 2.0 tools and have found many services, including wikis, blogs, and Delicious, to be useful to our staff for various projects. But in our service area, with our patrons, and in our experiences, marketing with MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, et al has demonstrably been a waste of time.*



*Web 2.0 tools are such a part of our marketing strategy at our library that this has already become an irrelevant question. We no longer ask whether email or telephones are important for marketing/promoting library services. They are simply part of the daily equipment we use to tell our story. The important thing to remember is that they are not appropriate tools for every audience nor every message.*

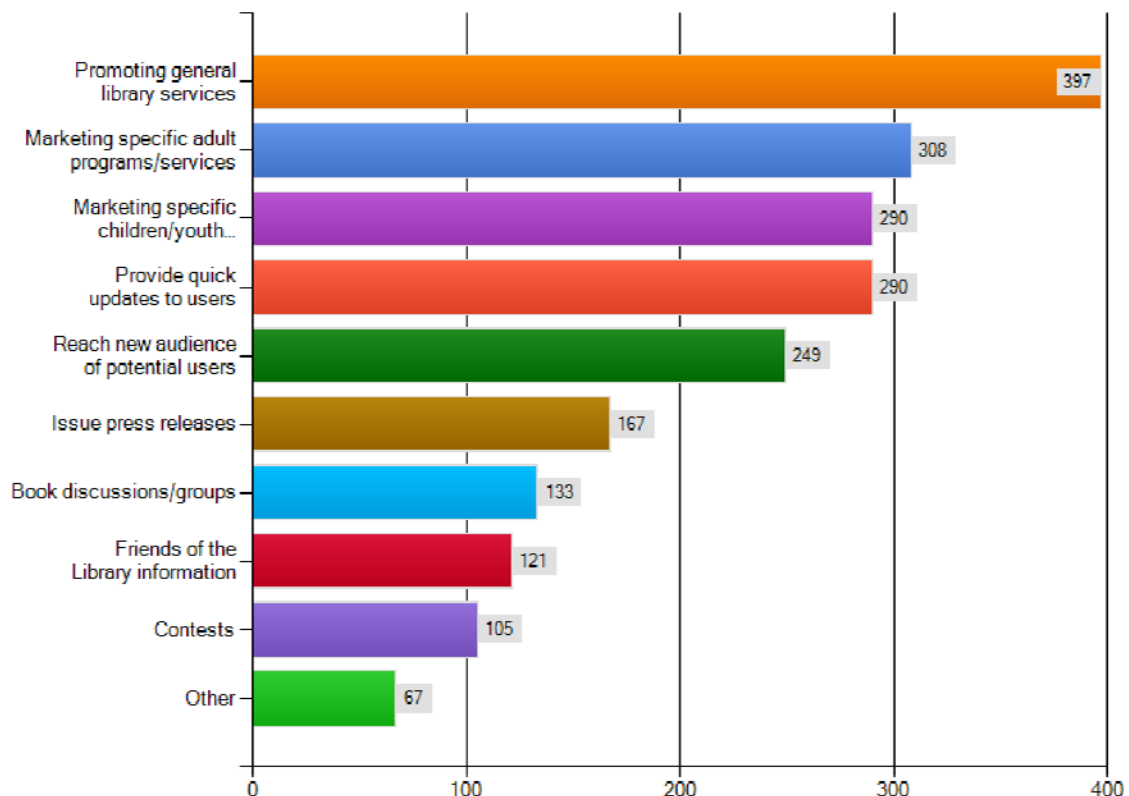
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Respondents from libraries that have already implemented Web 2.0 tools predominantly use them for promoting general library services (77.7%). Other highly ranked uses for Web 2.0 tools in the library were marketing specific adult programs and/or services (60.3%), marketing specific children's and/or youth services programs (56.8), providing quick updates to users (56.8%), and reaching a new audience of potential users (48.7%).

Other uses were shared as comments for this question. The following are selected comments regarding how respondents' libraries are using Web 2.0 tools:

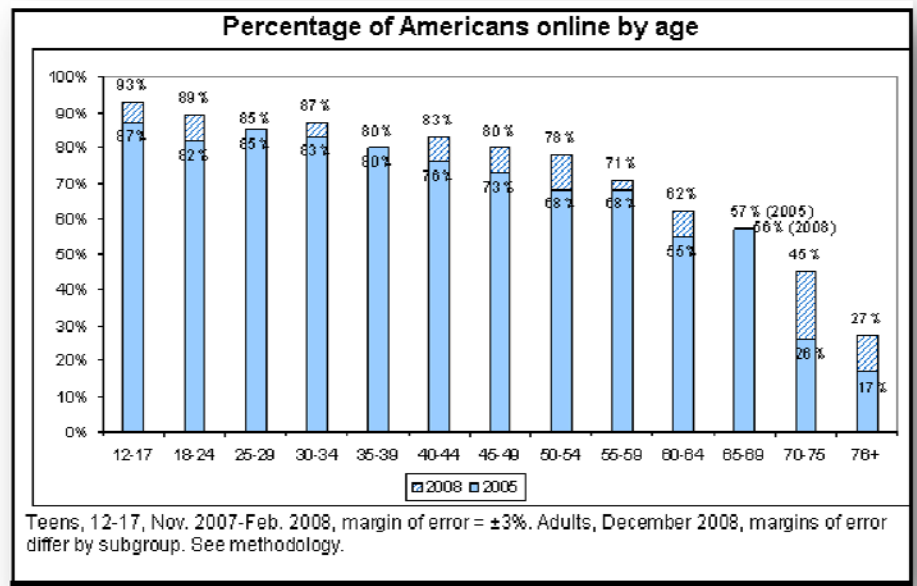
- *Sharing collection of historic photos*
- *Staff training and collaboration, link volunteers*
- *Blog on books/authors/reading*
- *Provide photos of library construction*
- *Reach other librarians in the network*
- *Gain information from other libraries, nonprofits and educational institutions in the area*
- *Reference, help with common questions*
- *Library curriculum & News about events*
- *Solicit patron feedback*
- *Monthly health awareness campaigns, events, resources, newsletter*
- *Publicize newly acquired material*
- *Service alerts, spreading news about events at other libraries, advocacy*
- *Volunteer and employee recruitment, and to enhance our visibility as a preferred employer, locally and nationally.*

**What does your library use Web 2.0 tools for? (check all that apply)**





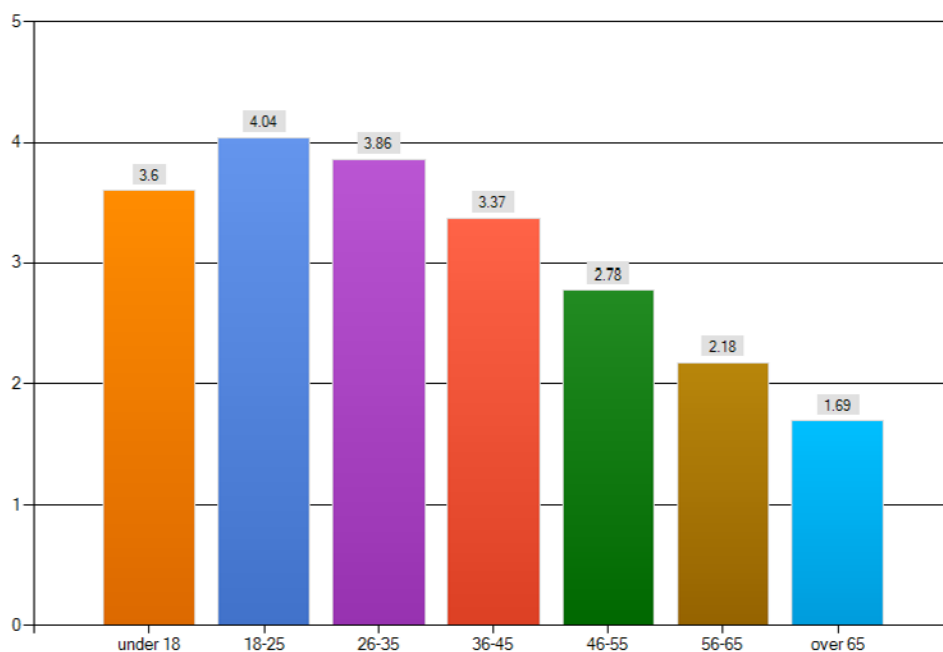
Many studies are reporting on uses of social media by age and gender. The perception of who uses social media in libraries tends to be closely related to various study outcomes. Information about females and their use of Social Media was recently posted to Marketingcharts.com. "According to the [SheSpeaks Second Annual Media Study](#) (pdf), 86% of US women now have a profile on at least one social networking site, a 48% increase from 58% who had a profile in 2008. Since 2008, the percentage of women reporting they log into their social networking sites at least once a day grew 36%, from 53% to 72%."



According to the *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, "Instant messaging, social networking, and blogging have gained ground as communications tools, but email remains the most popular online activity, particularly among older internet users. Fully 74% of internet users age 64 and older send and receive email, making email the most popular online activity for this age group.

At the same time, email has lost some ground among teens; whereas 89% of teens said they used email in 2004, just 73% currently say they do."

How likely do you believe the people in the following age brackets are influenced by the library's use of Web 2.0 tools? (1=not at all likely; 5=very likely)



When respondents were asked how likely they believe people in certain age brackets are influenced by the library's use of Web 2.0 tools, the majority

responded that individuals 18-25 were the most likely with 26-35 and under 18 ranking second and third. The Pew study also reported, "Teens and Generation Y (internet users age 18-32) are the most likely groups to use the internet for entertainment and for communicating with friends and family. These younger generations are significantly more likely than their older counterparts to seek entertainment through online videos, online games and virtual worlds, and they are also more likely to download music to listen to later. "

Respondents were also asked to provide success stories with their library's use of social media or Web 2.0 tools for promoting the library's services and events. Listed below are selected responses:

*From a recent website survey: "Now that the library is my Facebook friend, I have learned so much about the HC Library System. Prior to friending, I had no clue that all this virtual information existed! Now that I get the HC Lib updates via Facebook, I will be much more active, I believe. I look forward to using the system more and more."*

*Twitter has reached critical mass on our campus, so has been surprisingly effective. I'm not sure it's fair to say that some of these groups have been specifically influenced by 2.0 tools; we'd just be missing them where they live if we didn't use such tools.*

*I send out a quarterly newsfeed blast to our county employees containing our online newsletter for the public. While supervising a program one night, (I always ask, "How did you hear about this program") an attendee said that they read our online newsletter - she is a county employee. It made me realize all that time working on the newsletter was well spent.*

*The "aha" moment occurred when trying to figure out why seniors weren't coming to the beginning computer classes that we offered. We realized that we were doing a*

*lot of web-based marketing and that they weren't part of that audience.*

*We posted a photo on Twitter during our first annual author event and immediately received tweets from three authors saying they would like to speak at our event next year.*

*Since I have been using my constant contact e-newsletter, I have gotten over 200% increase in attendance to programs. I get to not only send out the initial release of information, but reminders closer to the date. That works! The day my e-newsletter comes out I get a flurry of calls. It is very obvious that they are reading my e-letter. And the age groups are over 30!*

*We found a patron on Twitter that was unhappy because her library card was*

*stolen and 10 videos were checked out and never returned. We were able to approach her through Twitter and turn the bad situation into a more positive one for her and all the Twitter users who read our updates. We believe it helped our image to intervene. If we had not been on Twitter, we would have never known about the problem ;^)*

*In one jurisdiction, a web 2.0 announcement on a blog drew more than 200 community members in less than 24 hours.*

*We set up an event page and purchased ads on Facebook for a Vampire Masquerade Ball on October 30 of this year. We targeted the age group we were hoping to attract (14-20) with the ads and started running them 2.5 weeks before the event. 350-400 people showed up for the event! We also put up posters in the high schools, and there were a couple of mentions in the local newspaper, but I believe the*

*Facebook ads and event page were the driving force behind the success of the event. It was hands down the most effective money we have ever spent on advertising (and it was cheap!).*

*I have a lot. I do training in Social Media Marketing. The number of our Facebook friends grew with very little effort. We have received testimonials on FB and reached out to potential new users on Twitter using Twitter search. My aha moment is more about how traditional media doesn't work well anymore. In this age of transparency relationship marketing is the best way to go - especially for libraries.*

*Simply that you need to be prepared to be very responsive. These are tools for 2-way communication, not simply pushing messages out. If you can't support responsiveness, think twice before entering. That's probably the 'aha' moment. There are many success stories (and that's why we keep using them).*

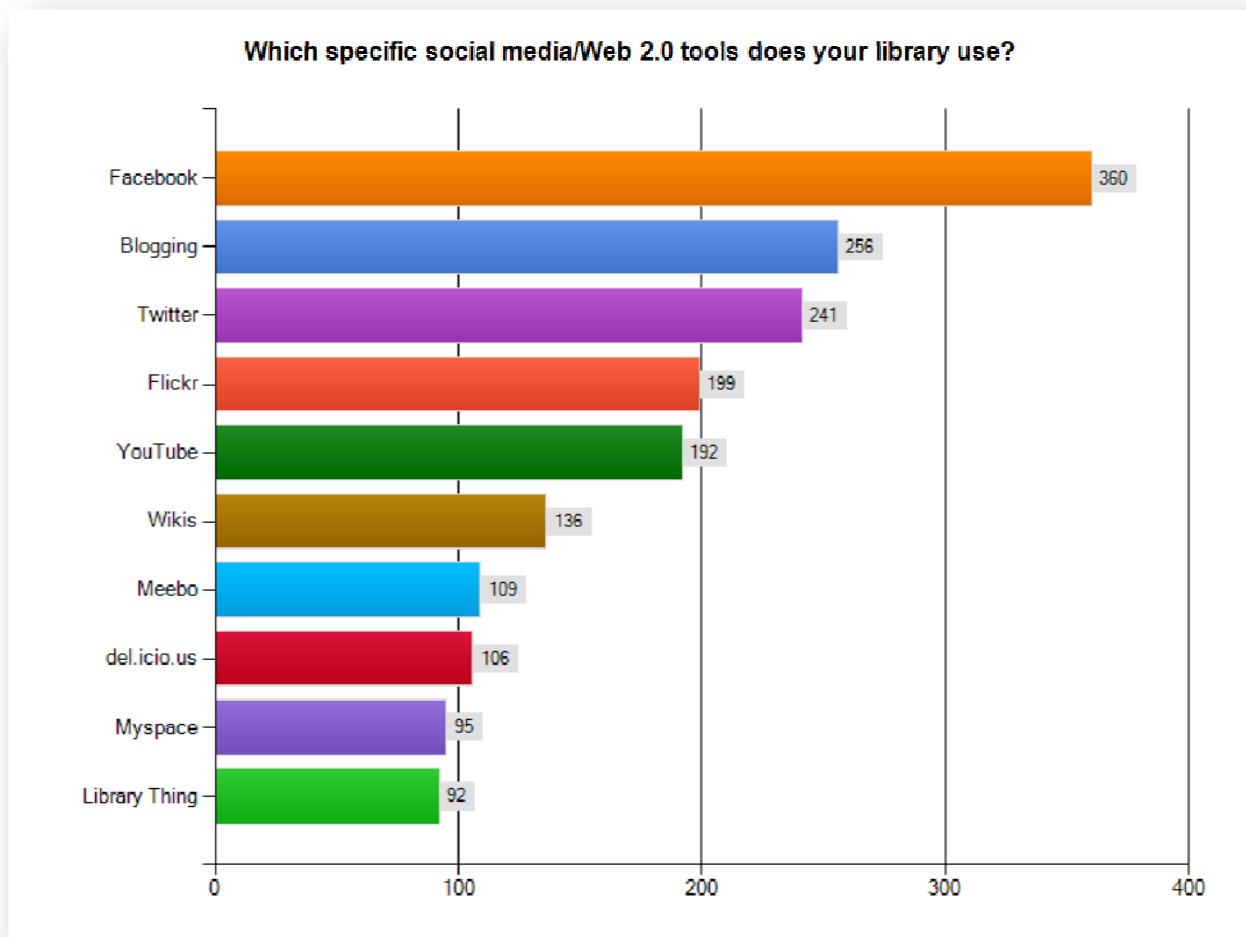
*In my previous job, I was the marketing person for a large urban library system. When we got our Facebook page up, it was amazing to see how we could immediately gauge the success of what we were posting by the responses. People feel great ownership of their public library and social media allows them to underscore and deepen that ownership.*

*As soon as I created a Facebook page and began communicating with "friends" that way, our weakest demographic (ages 18-25) has consistently shown improvement over the ensuing months.*

Many of these responses illustrate that if social media and Web 2.0 tools are used effectively, they can produce many positive outcomes.

Respondents were also asked to choose from a list of 26 Web 2.0 and social media tools their library uses. The tool most widely used was Facebook at 74.7% (360). Blogging tools came in second with 53.1% (256) and Twitter arrived in third place with 50% (241).

This question had 65 comments posted listing other related resources being used by libraries.



Below are selected comments:

*We use an add-on for our site which allows all of our content to be shared on the major social networking sites - so customers can share materials of interest themselves - we don't have to be there - they can talk it up for us.*

*I've had a lot of success with individualized e-mail blasts using mail merge. Not exactly 2.0, but it's been effective.*

*In all honesty, we do not have a unified approach to social media/web2.0 and it is only done by a few individuals on behalf of*

*the library. Meebo is the only service that we actually use on a regular basis. Many of us within the library use this service for personal or professional interests, but it is separate from the library.*

*Libraryh3lp is what we use for chat reference*

*Our Teen Dept. uses Goodreads. We are listed on Yelp. We are listed on Friendfeed.*

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A last open-ended comment option was provided for respondents. Below are selected comments:

*I think the most important thing for libraries to remember is to direct patrons back to their main web presence. It's not about repeating your message in several different places - it's about using 2.0 as virtual road signs to direct them to the correct primary entry for their library related needs.*

*Social networking works between people in the same mental and chronological age groups. I feel and am too old to really use 2.0 effectively. Younger librarians have a better chance at this. It's a learned language. I have reading but no speaking proficiency.*

*I'm not sure why my large library, with a very large community base does not participate in social networks of any type.*

*I believe social media only works if you have a social presence first. All of these items would be so much more effective on this*

*campus if the library had a presence in the student commons, in the dorms, in resident life. Some students don't 'discover' us until their last year and this is a failing on our*

*We have an intranet that hardly anyone uses. We have an online newsletter that I e-mail to a list but that's as advanced as it gets! I am very interested in many 2.0 applications but am not allowed to use them at work.*

*part. If we were a business with this mentality, we'd be slowly going bankrupt. We can't afford NOT to market ourselves to students in the age of Google and Highwire.*

*Just a general concern that the older demographics will never adapt to Web 2.0 and will lose "old school" contact through mail/newspapers/printing because of economic realities.*

*We have just started with social networking and it has yet to be well advertised. We're designing bookmarks now and hope we'll soon see an increase in traffic. Our major concern is keeping our pages up to date.*

# Summary

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What many of these responses illustrate is that many library administrators are still divided on the uses and/or benefits of Web 2.0 and social media in a library setting. While many respondents provided very useful examples of how their library has implemented and continue to use these tools, many comments voiced a great frustration with their library's administration who do not allow these tools to be used.



The challenge of implementing Web 2.0 and social media tools in the library centers on three basic principles: education, testing, and keeping up.



The most important thing for library administrators to understand about these tools is that they are simply another means of communication. The challenge of implementing Web 2.0 and social media tools in the library centers around three basic principles: education, testing, and keeping up. Since the playing field now changes so rapidly, we must learn what we can about these tools, test them out and see how they work best in our community. Then we must keep up to date as best we can. According to the Scottish Library & Information Council's *Guide to Using Web 2.0 in Libraries*:

*Web 2.0 services are increasingly becoming embedded in many areas of life as more people, from teenagers to national governments, recognize and harness these powerful communication tools. Similarly, libraries and librarians all over the world are using Web 2.0 technologies to promote services, share information, and engage with users and network with colleagues, on a global scale.*

It sounds simple but it does take time, therefore we must determine what no longer works, stop doing it, and take on new roles. We must also feel comfortable to test new methods of promoting library programs and events, and learn from others who are documenting their success.

Libraries no longer operate in a "if you build it they will come" mode. Libraries now compete with growing numbers of bookstores and coffee shops that offer free Wi-Fi and in-house use of magazines and books and games. We must learn to advance and change to best reach our customers on their level. Libraries are essential to many facets of life but if we don't change to meet the needs of our patrons and remind them we're here, we have the potential to get lost in the shuffle.

# Resources

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*The Global Online Media Landscape: Identifying Opportunities in a Challenging Market*. April 2009. The Nielsen Company.

*A Guide to Using Web 2.0 in Libraries*. Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), <http://www.slainte.org.uk/files/pdf/web2/Web2GuidelinesFinal.pdf>

*Marketingcharts.com*: <http://www.marketingcharts.com/interactive/gen-y-women-respond-to-interactive-non-intrusive-campaigns-11337/>

*New Media, New Influencers and Implications for Public Relations: A Research Study by the Society for New Communications Research*. 2008 SNCR Press.

*Pew Internet & American Life Project: Generations Online in 2009*. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1093/generations-online>

*Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics*. February 2009. School of Communication, American University. Center for Social Media.